

## **The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development**

### **Purpose**

The objectives of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development are summarized in the mission statement and goals of the project:

“Predicated on the belief that all young people have the capacity to develop into healthy and productive adults, this research seeks to describe the developmental, behavioral, and contextual variables that enhance and sustain positive youth development.”

In pursuit of this mission, the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development aims to strengthen research-based knowledge of positive youth development through:

- The advancement of a conceptual model of positive youth development
- The development of a measurement model that permits the assessment of such factors in positive youth development
- The identification of the variables that contribute to positive youth development

The findings of the study are intended to promote further research in this area and to inform practice with youth programming and related public policy, and thus, ultimately, to enhance healthy and positive youth development. Underlining the study's mission to be a cutting-edge investigation of positive youth development is the strong commitment to promoting community-practitioner collaboration in this research effort and the commitment to providing training and mentoring to students and colleagues interested in basic and applied research on positive youth development. An overarching responsibility of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development is to disseminate information emanating from the research program to researchers, practitioners, other professionals, and to the general public.

### **Survey Instruments and other documents**

This study initially involved children who were in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and is following them through the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. We add new youth each year and hope to follow them as well. The children are asked to answer items about themselves, their views, and their experiences. In all cases, the items used in our survey are either identical to or derived from extensive past research, involving thousands of youth, of the age and demographics characteristics to be involved in this study. While some of the items deal with topics such as the child's feelings, physical development, relationships, views and experiences regarding “problem behaviors,” no item to be used has been associated with participant harm or distress in the hundreds of studies wherein these items have been employed. Thus, the items and stringent confidentiality procedures we use are standard ones in the

field of adolescent development and protect the participants. Moreover, all items have, in these past studies, received parental consent, and IRB approval, by universities and colleges across the nation. As a consequence, we believe we have developed a set of items that (1) will assess the risks and positive behaviors of youth; (2) are standard measures in the field; (3) have proven to be safe and appropriate for participants of the ages to be studied; (4) represent, therefore, no risk of harm or distress to participants.

### **Confidentiality**

In order to insure participants' confidentiality, all questionnaires have a cover sheet that contains the identifying information. Upon receipt of the completed questionnaire, the data are given a code number and the cover sheet is separated from the questionnaire. Only the Principal Investigator (PI) and Project Director (PD) will have a list that links code numbers with participants' names. This list and the actual data are kept separately. The National 4-H Council funds this research. There are no costs incurred by participating schools or 4-H clubs or centers.